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## Timothy Dwight, Federalist Pope of Connecticut

ROBERT J. IMHOLT

WHEN the Reverend Timothy Dwight assumed the presidency of Yale College in 1795, he was already a widely respected poet, preacher, and educator. His *Greenfield Hill*, a long pastoral poem, excerpts of which are still occasionally anthologized, had just been published. A decade earlier he had written *The Conquest of Canaan*, one of his countrymen's first attempts to fashion a distinctly American epic along the lines of Homer and Virgil. Dwight's occasional verse was also broadly circulated and even set to music. From 1783 he had occupied the pulpit at Fairfield, Connecticut, one of the most remunerative in New England. And, if this was not enough, he had established academies—first at Northampton, Massachusetts, and then at Fairfield—that were serious rivals to Yale. Certainly Dwight had the advantage of proper ancestors, and as a good Christian, he firmly believed that all blessings came from God, but at age forty-three, he could look back upon a life of strenuous endeavor and enjoy the comforting knowledge that he was a self-made man.<sup>1</sup>

Pride, however, goeth before the fall. Over the next decade, a new Timothy Dwight would emerge. Alongside, and indeed overshadowing, the poet, preacher, and educator was Timothy Dwight, politician and Federalist Pope of New England. The new Dwight, the version found in many histories, was the walk-

<sup>1</sup>The best source for material on Dwight's early life is Charles E. Cunningham's *Timothy Dwight, 1752–1817: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1942), pp. 1–170. A more troubled early life for Dwight is set forth in Peter K. Kafer's "The Making of Timothy Dwight: A Connecticut Morality Tale," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47 (April 1990): 190–209. See also, Kenneth Silverman, *Timothy Dwight* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), and John R. Fitzmier, *New England's Moral Legislator: Timothy Dwight, 1752–1817* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

ing “repository of the venerable Connecticut *status quo*,” whose mind, according to Vernon Parrington, was “closed as tight as his study windows in January” and who “would not open the door to the nineteenth century.”<sup>2</sup> The new Timothy Dwight manned the defenses of the Federalist ministerial-political alliance against the forces of infidelity, democracy, Jeffersonianism, in short any development tinged by liberalism, enlightenment, or change.<sup>3</sup> To Leon Howard and Richard Hofstadter, Dwight embodied the “paranoid style.” According to Howard, “Dwight saw the apocalyptic beast and heard things that go bump in the night where there was nothing but social change in the mask of anarchy and rumbling challenges to human intelligence and understanding.”<sup>4</sup> The new Timothy Dwight was “a monster of Calvinist obscurantism and reaction.”<sup>5</sup> Even his most recent biographer, John Fitzmier, concurs that Dwight “earned . . . a well-deserved place in the literature describing the ‘paranoid style’ of American politics.”<sup>6</sup>

The latter-day Dwight was only in part his own creation, however. He had assumed the Yale presidency at an auspicious moment. Jay’s Treaty, the Whiskey Rebellion, the XYZ Affair, the Alien and Sedition Acts, the rise of political parties, to say nothing of the dramatic social and economic changes at home and the French Revolution abroad, were events that inevitably drew the attention of public figures such as Dwight, and as a public figure his words and actions were systematically scrutinized.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in the years between 1795 and 1800, Dwight fell

<sup>2</sup>Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920*, 3 vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927–30), 1:358–59, 361.

<sup>3</sup>Sidney E. Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786–1858: A Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 47–48.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 13; Leon Howard, *The Connecticut Wits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), pp. 400–401.

<sup>5</sup>Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 189. May, however, takes exception to this view.

<sup>6</sup>Fitzmier, *New England’s Moral Legislator*, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup>A recent study that emphasizes the tensions in the decade is James Robert Sharp’s *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); see also, Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Feder-*

into the hands of men such as John Cosens Ogden, David Austin, and Stanley Griswold; Ephraim Kirby and Abraham Bishop; William Duane and Charles Holt. The remaking of Timothy Dwight is, to be sure, as much their story as his.



John Cosens Ogden was the first to dub Dwight the “Pope of New England.” Born in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, in 1751, Ogden received a proper Calvinist education as a member of the Princeton class of 1770. Upon graduation, he removed to New Haven, where his sister, the wife of Pierpont Edwards, lived. Ogden undoubtedly hoped that his fellow Princetonian and brother-in-law, a prominent figure in New Haven political and business circles, would help him find a suitable position.<sup>8</sup> His New Haven roots deepened when, in 1774, he married Mary Clap Wooster, daughter of prominent merchant and collector of customs David Wooster and granddaughter of Yale president Thomas Clap.

The Revolutionary War profoundly affected Ogden’s fortunes. His father-in-law accepted a major general’s commission in the Continental Army only to die in the Battle of Danbury in May 1777. Meanwhile, the economic base of New Haven collapsed as the British raided along the Connecticut coast. For a time, taking in boarders provided a sufficient income, but supporting his wife and mother-in-law eventually drained whatever resources Ogden had accumulated. In 1784, with the war over, Ogden sold his half-interest in his father’s estate and used the proceeds to open a general store. In rather short order, however, Ogden was out of business and deeply in debt.

With his next occupational shift, Ogden took a sharp turn. In 1786 he became a deacon in the Episcopal Church, and two

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*alism: The Early American Republic, 1788–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup>Ogden’s sister had married Pierpont Edwards who, in the closed world of New England families, was also the uncle of Timothy Dwight.

years later he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Samuel Seabury. His first parish was in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.<sup>9</sup>

Ogden's first few years in Portsmouth were relatively uneventful, but in 1791 he found himself at the center of a controversy with local Congregationalists. Seabury's attempt to prove apostolic succession prompted criticism from, among others, the Reverend Samuel MacClintock of Greenland, New Hampshire. Rising to Seabury's defense, and using history creatively, Ogden defended Episcopalians against charges of pseudo-Catholicism and unduly allying church and state. It was not the Episcopalians who violated that doctrine, Ogden countered; rather, the supporters of the congregational system were the very embodiment of caeseropapism. "No man can preach or speak," he wrote, "but by permission of the Pope of Greenland."<sup>10</sup> The vehemence with which Ogden pressed his case did not suit his genteel congregation, and he was soon removed from his pulpit. No longer welcome in Portsmouth, Ogden spent the next few years roaming the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont and New Hampshire in search of converts, while his wife and children lived with the Widow Wooster in New Haven.

During his years of missionary work, Ogden nursed his resentments until they swelled into an implacable hatred of the Congregational clergy. When Asabel Hooker and Cotton Mather Smith traveled across Vermont as itinerant preachers in the middle part of the decade, Ogden launched what one historian has described as "stinging attacks" on them.<sup>11</sup> In 1797, Ogden issued a pamphlet entitled *An Appeal to the Candid*

<sup>9</sup>For brief sketches of Ogden's life, see Richard A. Harrison, *Princetonians, 1769-1775: A Biographical Dictionary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 93-97; Alan V. Briceland, "John D. Ogden: Messenger and Propagandist for Matthew Lyon, 1798-1799," *Vermont History* 43 (Spring 1975): 103-21.

<sup>10</sup>John C. Ogden, *Letters, Occasioned by the Publication of a Private Epistolary Correspondence, Begun by Mr. Samuel Macclintock, Preacher to a Puritan Congregation in Greenland, New-Hampshire* (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1791), p. 38.

<sup>11</sup>James R. Rohrer, *Keepers of the Covenant: Frontier Missions and the Decline of Congregationalism, 1774-1818* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 49.

*upon the Present State of Religion and Politics in Connecticut*.<sup>12</sup> Then, over the next four years, he wrote four more pamphlets as well as a series of articles that appeared in the *Philadelphia Aurora* and the *New London Bee*.<sup>13</sup> The central argument of Ogden's writings was that Timothy Dwight was using his position as president of Yale to spread the theology of his grandfather, Jonathan Edwards, and to "reduce the nation to Calvinistic Popery."<sup>14</sup>

According to Ogden, Dwight had established a tyranny over Yale. Faculty were required to swear allegiance to the Saybrook Platform of 1708. Students, regardless of denomination, were required to attend the college church and were forbidden from attending Episcopal or other churches. As professor of theology and pastor of the college church, Dwight had further strengthened his influence. His monopoly over the religious life of the institution was, according to Ogden, "persisted in, merely to give an opportunity to the President to spread the Edwardean [*sic*] tenets."<sup>15</sup>

Dwight's stranglehold on Yale College, Ogden claimed, was mere prelude to the president's larger ambition: to win control over the entire country's higher educational establishment. That ambition was hardly beyond attainment, for Yale graduates were assuming college presidencies throughout New England and the nation. Jeremiah Atwater, a New Havenite and Yale graduate, was the first president of Middlebury College; Dwight's uncle and mentor, Jonathan Edwards, Jr., was named president of Union College in Schenectady; and Abraham Bald-

<sup>12</sup>John C. Ogden, *An Appeal to the Candid upon the Present State of Religion and Politics in Connecticut* (New Haven: T. S. Green, 1797). The pamphlet was subsequently reprinted in Litchfield, Connecticut (1798), and Stockbridge, Massachusetts (1799).

<sup>13</sup>John C. Ogden, *Friendly Remarks to the People of Connecticut, upon Their College and Schools* ([Litchfield?]: [Thomas Collier?], 1799), *A Short History of the Late Ecclesiastical Oppressions in New England and Vermont . . .* (Richmond: James Lyon, 1799), *A View of the Calvinistic [*sic*] Clubs in the United States* ([Litchfield?]: [Thomas Collier?], [1799?]), and *A View of the New England Illuminati . . .* (Philadelphia: James Carey, 1799).

<sup>14</sup>Ogden, *An Appeal to the Candid*, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>Ogden, *An Appeal to the Candid*, p. 4.

win, Dwight's classmate and fellow tutor at Yale, was founding the University of Georgia. Just like the Jesuits, the supporters of Edwards were using "the powerful engine of the education of youth . . . that they may controul government, through the instrumentality of their pupils."<sup>16</sup>

With his power over higher education well secured, Dwight was poised to move into the realm of politics, Ogden asserted. Indeed, through clerical associations and consociations designed to assure conformity, Dwight had already assured that, in Ogden's words, "Connecticut is almost totally an ecclesiastical state, ruled by the President of the College as Monarch." In his multifaceted attack on Dwight, Ogden revived a controversy from the early 1790s over the appropriation of revenues from the sale of Connecticut's western lands. One plan, which was ultimately rejected, would have established a fund for the payment of ministers' salaries. As it was, the clergy were making good money "all of which is collected from the sweat of the people and their labors," Ogden argued, and the people should be advised that they had ever more to fear from the consolidation and extension of the Congregational establishment under Dwight.<sup>17</sup>

Dwight's predecessors in the Yale presidency had been content to train ministers, but Dwight was also training lawyers, who, with Yale's interests at heart, would go on to practice in the state.<sup>18</sup> Citing the 1792 agreement by which the state bailed out the financially strapped college in exchange for including the governor and other high state officials on the Yale Corporation, Ogden maintained that rather than being an opening for state control of Yale, the arrangement was an avenue for Yale's control of the state. The meetings of the corporation provided a

<sup>16</sup>Ogden, *An Appeal to the Candid*, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup>Ogden, *Friendly Remarks*, p. 17. For an overview of this controversy, see James R. Beasley, "Emerging Republicans and the Standing Order: The Appropriations Act Controversy in Connecticut, 1793 to 1795," *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (October 1972): 587–610.

<sup>18</sup>See Christopher Grasso, *A Speaking Artocracy: Transforming Public Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).



clear opportunity for Dwight to use his eloquence to affect state policy. Yale, too rich already, was growing wealthier at the people's expense, Ogden charged. Dwight's "taste for shew [*sic*] and elegance in buildings" fueled the demand for more money, and why should the library receive additional funds when it currently housed more books "than can be read by the students of any kind during their residence"?<sup>19</sup>

Germane to Ogden's argument was a circumstance close to his own heart, the straitened circumstances of the valiant General Wooster's widow. In May 1799, the *New London Bee* published a long article, written by Ogden, entitled "The Progress of liberty and justice, exhibited in the history of an American officer's widow."<sup>20</sup> The long-suffering Mrs. Wooster, having given her husband to the American cause, had never received an adequate pension. Indeed, after the British pillaged the Wooster home on one of their visits to New Haven, Connecticut had returned to her only one-sixteenth of its value. The state of Connecticut had money enough to support Yale and its ministry but none to support the widows of true patriots. Ogden did not, however, disclose to his readers that he was the widow's destitute son-in-law; nor did he mention that, having defaulted on a longstanding debt to treasury secretary Oliver Wolcott, he was currently residing in the Litchfield jail.

In *A Short History of the Late Ecclesiastical Oppressions in New England and Vermont*, published in 1799, Ogden maintained that Dwight was "a more formidable character than the Pope of Rome." One need only see him in the pulpit, where he appeared "with ruffles, a garnet coloured coat and white underdress," to comprehend his papal ambitions. Connecticut "lives under the tyranny of a religious establishment, test act, [and] the Calvinistic Popery of Doct. Dwight," Ogden concluded in his sweeping indictment of Connecticut Federalism and the Congregational clergy.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Ogden, *Friendly Remarks*, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup>*New London Bee*, 15, 22, and 29 May and 19 June 1799.

<sup>21</sup>Ogden, *Short History of the Late Ecclesiastical Oppressions*, p. 18.



Not all of Dwight's detractors were from opposing religious denominations, however. A native of New Haven, the Reverend David Austin was the son of a deacon of the Whitehaven Church pastored by Dwight's uncle and mentor, the Reverend Jonathan Edwards, Jr. A member of the Yale class of 1779, Austin's years at Yale partially overlapped those of Dwight's tutorship. After the Revolution, Austin prepared for the ministry with one of the leaders of the New Divinity movement, Joseph Bellamy, and in 1788 accepted a call to the church in Elizabethtown, New Jersey.<sup>22</sup>

Austin became increasingly obsessed with the Second Coming of Christ and the millennium as foretold in the Book of Revelation. In the early 1790s, he issued several works with millennial themes, including an American edition of Jonathan Edwards's *History of Redemption*.<sup>23</sup> While some were ready to excuse Austin's obsession as an aftereffect of scarlet fever, which he had contracted in 1795, others became alarmed and disaffected. When he predicted the Second Coming of Christ for the fourth Sunday of May 1796, he overstepped acceptable bounds. He resigned his pulpit to avoid dismissal, while his wife returned to her father's home in Norwich, Connecticut. Austin returned to New Haven, where he "erected a large number of houses and stores for the use of Jews in America who were to assemble preparatory to embarking for the Holy Land, where they were to wait for the Messiah's coming."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History*, 6 vols. (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1885–1912), 4:91–94; William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit, Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of Various Denominations from the Early Settlement of the Country to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-five*, 9 vols. (New York: R. Carter & Brothers, 1857–59), 2:195–205.

<sup>23</sup>David Austin, *The Millennium: or, the Thousand Years of Prosperity, Promised to the Church of God . . .* (Elizabeth Town, N.J.: Shepard Kollock, 1794), *The Voice of God to the People of These United States . . .* (Elizabeth Town: Shepard Kollock, [1796]), *A Prophetic Leaf . . .* (New Haven: Printed for the Author, 1798), and an edition of Jonathan Edwards's *History of Redemption* (New York: T. and S. Swords, 1793). The first edition of this work was published in London in 1788.

<sup>24</sup>Dexter, *Biographical Sketches*, 4:92–93; on Austin's millennialism, see James Davidson, "Searching for the Millennium," *New England Quarterly* 45 (June 1972): 241–61, and Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 138–41, 165–67.

Austin's attacks upon Timothy Dwight began in 1799 with the publication of a pamphlet provocatively entitled *The Dance of Herodias, through the Streets of Hartford on Election Day, to the Tune of the Stars of Heaven in the Dragon's Tail; or a gentle trip at the heels of the strumpet of Babylon. Playing tricks in the attire of the daughters of Zion*.<sup>25</sup> Austin's specific target was the May meeting of the General Assembly in Hartford, where legislators gathered to elect executive and judicial officers for the coming year and the established clergy gathered to offer prayers and observe the proceedings. At the appropriate time, the Assembly rose and marched with the clergy, in full vestment, from the state house to the First Church to listen to the election sermon.<sup>26</sup> At its conclusion, the assemblymen returned to the public's business, while the clergy retired to banquet at public expense. To Austin, the whole ceremony smacked of Romanism. The Beast of Revelation, he argued, was the union of civil and ecclesiastical power at Rome. Citizens of Connecticut, however, should not rest content, for "the same guilt which is laid at the door of the *papal* household . . . must be disposed of by those who imitate her example in the *protestant* departments."<sup>27</sup>

From the symbolic marriage of church and state, Austin narrowed his sights to Timothy Dwight. Dwight had, in Austin's view, misinterpreted chapter 4, verse 13, of the Book of Revelation: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." The standard interpretation in eighteenth-century eschatology was that these "unclean

<sup>25</sup>David Austin, *The Dance of Herodias* . . . ([East Windsor, Conn.]: Printed for the Author [by Luther Pratt], 1799). For additional criticism of the clerical presence at the meetings of the legislature, see the Hartford publication *The American Mercury*, 19 September 1805.

<sup>26</sup>Timothy Dwight had given the election sermon in 1791, even though in his *Friend* essays in 1786 he had labeled the ceremony "a blind perpetuation of ancestral bad taste." Timothy Dwight, *Virtuous Rulers a National Blessing: A Sermon Preached at the General Election, May 12th 1791* (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1791); "The Friend," *New-Haven Gazette and the Connecticut Magazine*, 23 March 1786–4 October 1787.

<sup>27</sup>Austin, *Dance of Herodias*, p. 7.

spirits" represented the Roman Catholic clergy. In a Fourth of July sermon in 1798, *The Duty of Americans at the Present Crisis*,<sup>28</sup> Dwight, however, had chosen to associate them with Voltaire and the societies of Illuminati instead of the Jesuits. Austin was astounded that Dwight could confuse the enemies of the Beast with its servants. "The doctor must look over the College library once more. There is a wide difference between the hierarchy of tumbling Rome, and the instruments conspiring and warring against it." In addition to Dwight, Austin also reviled the Reverend Nathaniel Strong, pastor of Hartford's First Church, and the Reverend Jedidiah Morse of Charlestown, Massachusetts, who had led the charge against the Illuminati in New England. These three "characters form the trinity of church and state policy," Austin declared.<sup>29</sup>

Dwight detractors Ogden and Austin were joined by a third, the Reverend Stanley Griswold. Born in Torrington in 1763, he enrolled in Yale at the end of the Revolution. Slightly older than the traditional student, Griswold graduated in 1786. He then spent a year as principal of the academy in Norwich before studying for the ministry. In 1790, he was in New Milford, Connecticut, settled as a colleague of the aged Nathaniel Taylor, whom he succeeded in 1800. Minister in a part of Connecticut known for its strict Calvinism, Griswold soon ran afoul of the ministerial association of Litchfield County which, in 1797, asked him to respond to charges of universalism. Declining to stand trial, Griswold was expelled from the association. In short order, the controversy split his congregation. Among Griswold's supporters was Nehemiah Strong, who had come to New Milford after being pushed out of his position as Professor of Natural Theology at Yale, in large measure because of his theological views. The tensions in New Milford only ended with Griswold's resignation in the summer of 1802.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Timothy Dwight, *The Duty of Americans at the Present Crisis, Illustrated in a Discourse, Preached on the Fourth of July, 1798, at the Request of the Citizens of New-Haven* (New Haven: Thomas and Samuel Green, 1798).

<sup>29</sup>Austin, *Dance of Herodias*, pp. 27–28, 33–34.

<sup>30</sup>On Griswold, see Dexter, *Biographical Sketches*, 4:476–81; Payne Kenyon Kilbourne, *A Biographical History of the County of Litchfield, Connecticut . . .* (New York: Clark, Austin & Co., 1851), pp. 84–86.

Throughout the controversy, Griswold defended himself in sermons and pamphlets.<sup>31</sup> His primary target was Connecticut's peculiar alliance of church and state. In Griswold's view, "whenever religion has been leagued with temporal policy . . . it has uniformly been corrupted." In a sermon preached at a Wallingford rally to celebrate the election of Jefferson, Griswold, although he did not mention Dwight by name, condemned the tendency to repress freedom of religion and lamented the loss of Dwight's predecessor at Yale, Ezra Stiles, a man of "dignity" who was open to differing views.<sup>32</sup>

Like Austin, Griswold chose Dwight's 1798 attack on infidelity as a particular locus of criticism, alluding also to Dwight's anonymously published satirical poem *The Triumph of Infidelity*. Speaking in New Haven on the eve of the Yale commencement in 1803 in one of a series of direct challenges to Dwight and the standing order, Griswold delivered a discourse entitled *Infidelity not the only enemy of Christ, or Hypocrisy and Antichrist exposed*. The timing of the address as well as the title pointed unmistakably to Dwight. Citing a historical example that Dwight had used in his *Triumph of Infidelity*, Griswold bent it to his own ends. Just as the emphasis on tradition, councils, and the rise of the papacy in the third century corrupted the purity of Scripture, might not the present appeal to "*tradition and old habits, and steady habits*" be a pharisaical attempt "to effect an *enlargement* of the foundation of Christianity after the manner of the papal church"? Political differences had been "brought up and made a line of demarcation in a religious and moral point of view. . . . The question with many seems to be not so much what God a man serves, as what *party*,—not so

<sup>31</sup>Stanley Griswold, *A Statement of the Singular Manner of Proceeding of the Rev. Association of the South Part of Litchfield County . . .* (Hartford: Elisha Babcock, 1797), *Truth Its Own Test and God Its Only Judge, . . . A Discourse, Delivered at New Milford, October 12th, 1800* (Bridgeport, Conn.: Lazarus Beach, 1800), *Overcoming Evil with Good,—A Sermon Delivered at Wallingford, Connecticut, March 11, 1801 . . .* (Hartford: Elisha Babcock, 1801), and *Infidelity Not the Only Enemy of Christianity, or, Hypocrisy and Anti-Christ Exposed: A Discourse Delivered at New-Haven on the Evening Proceeding the Public Commencement, September, 13th, 1803* (New Haven: Sidney's Press, 1803).

<sup>32</sup>Griswold, *Truth Its Own Test*, pp. 17–18, and *Overcoming Evil with Good*, p. 32.

much what SAVIOUR he believes in, as what *President!*" And "what was the meaning of the . . . groundless predictions" made by Dwight in 1798 that "if certain men should come into office, our Bibles would be taken from us, and houses of worship rased to the ground, our religion destroyed? . . . Was this making use of the sacred pretense of *religion* to compass *ambitious, earthly views?*"—Dreadful duplicity!"<sup>33</sup>



The ministerial attacks on Timothy Dwight might have remained internecine squabbles had not printers and politicians recognized their value in advancing their own personal and party agendas. Of the leading Jeffersonian politicians in Connecticut in 1800, two, Ephraim Kirby and Abraham Bishop, played direct roles in the campaign against the Yale president. Kirby, a Revolutionary war veteran who had fought in battles from Bunker Hill to Germantown, receiving "thirteen wounds, seven of which were sabre cuts on the head," established himself in a legal career in Litchfield after the war and parleyed his "honourable" wounds into a seat in the Assembly in 1791.<sup>34</sup> In the late 1790s, Kirby helped Ogden distribute his early pamphlets. Indeed, in early 1799, when Ogden was stewing over Dwight in the Litchfield jail, Kirby made sure that the minister's diatribes were circulated.<sup>35</sup> Kirby also supported Griswold in his battles with the Litchfield ministerial association and in general attacks upon the standing order in Connecticut.

Equally important in politicizing the religious question was Abraham Bishop. A native of New Haven and a member of the Yale class of 1778, he was well acquainted with Dwight, who had served as a tutor during Bishop's entire collegiate career, as well as with Ogden and Austin. From a legal and mercantile, rather than a ministerial, background, Bishop had the means

<sup>33</sup>Griswold, *Infidelity*, pp. 10, 19–20, 16, 18.

<sup>34</sup>Kilbourne, *Biographical History*, pp. 103–6; see also Alan Vance Braceland, "Ephraim Kirby: Connecticut Jeffersonian, 1757–1804: Origins of the Jeffersonian Party in Connecticut" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1965).

<sup>35</sup>*Litchfield Monitor*, 31 July 1799.

during the 1780s to spend a year in Europe, where he acquired a taste for more radical political and social philosophies than those preached at Yale. Having married his sixteen-year-old wife under less than proper circumstances—she being free of her father's protection while attending school in Portsmouth, New Hampshire—Bishop returned to New Haven in 1795 to pursue a career in law. Trying to support himself and his young bride with a series of legal clerkships secured through the influence of his father and friends, Bishop was never able to establish an adequate practice of his own. Disgruntled, his wife returned to her father's house in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and sued Bishop for divorce.<sup>36</sup>

Bishop's differences with orthodoxy became clear during this period of the late 1780s and early 1790s. While in New Hampshire, he took Ogden's side in the dispute with Reverend Samuel MacClintock. Even more telling were Bishop's poetic efforts. In 1791, under his frequently used pseudonym, John Paul Martin, a narrative poem entitled *The Triumph of Truth: History and Visions of Clio* appeared in Boston. The poem was a direct response to Dwight's *The Triumph of Infidelity*, of three years earlier. Whereas Dwight had criticized the philosophy of universalism and its tendency to excuse all kinds of misbehavior, Bishop defended the Boston-centered theological position and disputed the more traditional Calvinist stance advocated by Dwight.<sup>37</sup>

While his differences with the Calvinist establishment dated at least from the early 1790s, not until 1800 did Bishop align himself with the emerging Jeffersonian Republican Party. His official break with the establishment occurred in September of that year, when, a respected court administrator, he was invited to address the Phi Beta Kappa Society on the eve of the Yale commencement. Whether he had already decided upon a new

<sup>36</sup>Dexter, *Biographical Sketches*, 4:17–24; David Waldstreicher and Stephen R. Crossbart, "Abraham Bishop's Vocation: Or, the Mediation of Jeffersonian Politics," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (Winter 1998): 617–58.

<sup>37</sup>John Paul Martin [Abraham Bishop], *The Triumph of Truth: History and Visions of Clio* (Boston: Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews, 1791).



political venture or was inspired by a recent meeting with Aaron Burr, he decided to make the speech a highly partisan one. But when shown an advance copy of the address, the Yale sponsors withdrew their invitation. Bishop delivered his address nonetheless, across the green from the college, and he attracted a far larger crowd than did his last-minute replacement.<sup>38</sup>

The first part of Bishop's address criticized the tariff and banking policies of the Adams administration, which, he argued, favored wealthy merchants at the expense of yeoman farmers, a position hardly designed to please the mercantile leaders of New Haven. He also lambasted the president's foreign policy. Next, Bishop turned his attention to "some of the leading Clergy," who "wish to combine Church and State." The clergy of the standing order, who were all gathered in New Haven for commencement the next day, should forsake politics and concentrate on preaching, Bishop argued. Too many were trying "to show that Satan and Cain were jacobins."<sup>39</sup>

When the lecture was printed in pamphlet form, an appendix was included that contained even more direct attacks upon Yale. Like Ogden and others, Bishop targeted the 1792 act that seated state officers on the Yale Corporation in exchange for a state subsidy. Rather than allowing for an element of secular control over a religious institution, Bishop insisted that the act created "a combination of Church and State [that] furnished a column of influence" that stretched from the college to the statehouse.<sup>40</sup>

Jefferson's election in 1800 did not soften Bishop's rhetoric, no doubt because Connecticut remained staunchly Federalist despite the success of the Republican Party elsewhere. Over the next several years, Bishop staged several mass rallies. The

<sup>38</sup>Abraham Bishop, *Connecticut Republicanism—An Oration on the Extent and Power of Political Delusion. Delivered in New-Haven, on the Evening Preceding the Public Commencement, September, 1800* (New Haven: n.p., 1800). This pamphlet was also reprinted at Newark and Philadelphia in 1800 and in Albany and Bennington the following year. See also the *Hartford Connecticut Courant*, 15 September 1800.

<sup>39</sup>Bishop, *Connecticut Republicanism*, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup>Bishop, *Connecticut Republicanism*, app., p. vii. New Haven was, and would be until 1873, the co-capital of Connecticut. Consequently, one of the two statehouses stood directly across the street from the Yale campus.



first was held at Wallingford in March 1801 to celebrate Jefferson's inauguration. Others were mounted annually on the eve of Yale's commencement, a timing and setting deliberately chosen to highlight differences with Dwight and Yale. Among the speakers at these rallies were none other than the Reverend David Austin and the Reverend Stanley Griswold, and anti-Dwight rhetoric was a key element of the program.<sup>41</sup> At the 1801 Wallingford rally, for example, Bishop charged, in a direct reference to Dwight, that "the man who cries Infidelity, Infidel Philosophy, and yet seeks no Christian virtues to oppose it, is the Arch-Infidel." And as for Yale, it was "a common sewer for abuse upon republicans and a sink for the dish water of political clergy." Bishop hammered away at the church-state question. "Moses and Aaron find it profitable to walk hand in hand. The clergyman preaches politics; the civil prates orthodoxy." Most of the Federalist political leaders of Connecticut, Bishop pointed out, were the sons, sons-in-law, or other relatives of clergymen. And the Yale Corporation was the embodiment of such inbreeding.<sup>42</sup>



In addition to the pamphlets and speeches at political rallies, three newspapers played major roles in fashioning Timothy Dwight's reputation at the turn of the century. The first was the *Philadelphia Aurora*, the preeminent Jeffersonian paper in what was the nation's capital until 1800. Editor William Duane's particular interest in Connecticut politics no doubt stemmed from his support of fellow Irish-American, Representative Matthew Lyon of Vermont, who had a rather ungentlemanly encounter with Connecticut Federalist Roger Griswold on the floor of Congress. Both Duane and Lyon were later jailed under the Sedition Act. The other two in the trio against

<sup>41</sup>David Austin, *Republican Festival, Proclamation, and New Jerusalem* (New Haven: n.p., 1803); Griswold, *Infidelity Not the Only Enemy of Christianity*.

<sup>42</sup>Abraham Bishop, *Oration Delivered in Wallingford, on the 11th of March, 1801, Before the Republicans of the State of Connecticut . . .* (New Haven: William W. Morse, 1801), pp. 5, vii; *American Mercury*, 20 and 27 January 1803.

Dwight were Elisha Babcock's *Hartford American Mercury* and the *New London Bee*, edited by Charles Holt, who in time also found himself a guest of the state under charges of sedition. From 1799 through 1805, in addition to providing a forum for the writings of Ogden and Bishop, the editors and correspondents of these papers launched periodic assaults on Dwight and Yale.<sup>43</sup>

The most prominent objection to Dwight continued to be that he used his position to advance a conservative political and religious agenda. As "Echenes" wrote to the *American Mercury* in 1801, "The President of Yale is the *grand pabulum* and *fountain head* of political and religious orthodoxy."<sup>44</sup> A correspondent to the *New London Bee* asserted that Dwight had allowed Yale to be "absorbed into the hands of a party," part of a larger scheme "calculated to engross all power, both civil and ecclesiastical; and to plunge this state, now the happiest under heaven into all the miseries occasioned by the hierarchies of Europe."<sup>45</sup>

Dwight, it was charged, opposed republicanism and favored monarchy. His father, in a statement that stretched the truth, was characterized as "in our revolution a *Tory*." Certainly, Timothy Dwight's support of the American cause was highly questionable. "His *patriotism* might have been, and probably was, an expedient to prevent the confiscation of his personal inheritance." His "early education was in opposition to republicanism, and in favor of the strongest attachment to the government of England." At Yale, he had "prostituted his talents and exerted his eloquence to convince the students in his care that there was neither safety, nor happiness in a *republican government*," that there was "no hope of felicity" until Americans "passed through the tempestuous sea of republicanism and rest in the tranquil and tepid realm of monarchy." And in 1805 it was reported that Dwight, refusing to allow students to celebrate the

<sup>43</sup>On Duane and Holt, see James Morton Smith, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 277–306, 373–84.

<sup>44</sup>*American Mercury*, 30 April 1801; reprinted in *New London Bee*, 13 May 1801.

<sup>45</sup>*New London Bee*, 22 May 1799; *American Mercury*, 20 April 1805.

Fourth of July, had declared that “no substantial reasons could be given for celebrating the day” and that he had always considered American separation from England “unfortunate.”<sup>46</sup>

Education at Yale, Dwight’s critics maintained, was an indoctrination in anti-republican principles. A youth enters college at an impressionable age and immediately “his opinions are swayed to a coincidence with those of the authority under whose direction he is bound to walk.” The faculty are only “the subalterns of Dr. Dwight.” “The walls of the college are lined with evenomed [*sic*] politicians who have blindly imbibed their tenets to deal them out to younger men with a sincerity characteristic of monkish superstition.” When the student reaches his senior year, he comes under Dwight’s direct tutelage. “Presidential splendour breaks in upon him like the effulgence of day, succeeding the gloomy shades of night. . . . His heart is wrapt in astonishment and led away in admiration.”<sup>47</sup>

The Yale commencements at which students were awarded their degrees were dubbed political occasions by Dwight’s critics. As William Duane described it in the *Philadelphia Aurora*, with an allusion to chapter 16 of the Gospel of Matthew, which Catholics heralded as the basis for papal supremacy,

On this occasion, the governor and other civilians are subordinated to the President; they feel deeply impressed with a sense of their subordination, knowing that he can kill or make alive at the next election; and he emphatically holds the keys which commend their political damnation or salvation.

Commencement was also an occasion for “calling all the Priests of the State together . . . to eat and drink at the scholar’s expense.” Under Dwight, the occasion had devolved into “an instrument of promoting party and influencing the politics of the State.”<sup>48</sup> In the disputations that were part of the ceremony, students debated such questions as “Can a state of equality exist

<sup>46</sup>*American Mercury*, 9 September 1800, 10 February 1803, 26 July 1804, and 12 September 1805; *New London Bee*, 9 September 1800.

<sup>47</sup>*American Mercury*, 29 January 1801 and 6 October 1803.

<sup>48</sup>*Philadelphia Aurora*, 31 March 1800.

in civilized society?" with the winning side a foregone conclusion. In 1803, one writer condemned the "ebullitions of scurvility and the political trash which of late years is wont to be vomitted on the Commencement stage."<sup>49</sup>

Once they graduated, Dwight's students went on to dispense the Federalist message. Clergymen desert "the sacred duties of office . . . becoming political pimps."<sup>50</sup> Repeatedly attacked in the press was the Missionary Society of Connecticut, which was founded by Dwight and others in 1798. The object of the society was to recruit and support ministers of the gospel on the frontier. To its critics, however, the society was designed for ministers to drain "the public treasuries . . . and their converts' purse." Connecticut missionaries have not been "the means of converting one sinner whether civilized or savage," but they "have become speculators, received great wages, [and] propagated party designs." By 1805, the society had accumulated "more capital than the biggest bank," and it was using the money in a highly partisan fashion. The whole missionary effort, the press concluded, had been created by Dwight "in hopes to gain a larger see than that at which he's nibbled."<sup>51</sup>

In sum, Dwight ruled Connecticut. Once the governor and other state officials received their seats on the Yale Corporation, from thenceforth "a sovereign pontiff, twelve cardinals, and a civil council of nine, and about four hundred parochial bishops" ran the state.<sup>52</sup> The legislators were nothing but puppets, and "HIS HOLINESS" served as the "*principal string puller*." "This Pope is . . . the pivot on which the politics of this state turn." Having won control of Connecticut, it was charged,

<sup>49</sup>*American Mercury*, 25 September 1800, 6 October 1803, and 19 and 26 April 1804.

<sup>50</sup>*American Mercury*, 22 October 1800.

<sup>51</sup>*American Mercury*, 27 June and 26 September 1805, and 10 April 1806; *New London Bee*, 22 and 29 May 1799.

<sup>52</sup>*Philadelphia Aurora*, 31 March 1800. For a discussion of the measure whereby the governor, lieutenant governor, and six members of the Council became members of the Yale Corporation, see John S. Whitehead, *The Separation of College and State: Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, and Yale, 1776-1876* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 40-41. Attacks on the 1792 changes in the Yale Corporation began even before Dwight was chosen president. See *American Mercury*, 6 April 1795.

Dwight wrote President Adams “intreating him to use his influence to bring about an established religion” in the nation. “The pope and his clergy have obtained almost exclusive direction of the press.” And woe to those who would “deny or doubt the Pope’s supremacy, or infallibility.”<sup>53</sup>



The attack on Timothy Dwight in the years from his assumption of the Yale presidency in 1795 to about 1805 was unrelenting, partisan, at times personal, and never dull. But was it accurate? Was Dwight seeking to establish a union of church and state? Did he preach partisan politics from the pulpit? Did he use Yale as an engine for his conservative personal agenda? Did he control or exercise an inordinate influence over the Federalist Party or the government of Connecticut? Indeed, was Timothy Dwight the Federalist Pope of New England?

Certainly Dwight was a respected figure with wide connections, but the Congregational establishment in Connecticut was divided and subdivided into so many groups and factions that no one could have presided over all. New Lights, Old Lights, New Divinity, Edwardsean—the labels were numerous and the theological distinctions among them unclear, even to contemporaries. About the only thing most Connecticut clergymen agreed upon was their opposition to the Unitarian and Universalist views that were winning over the church in Massachusetts. Dwight was a major figure in the formation of missionary societies and in fostering dialogue with the Presbyterians of the mid-Atlantic states, but he never dominated the religious establishment in Connecticut.

Moreover, despite the charges of his opponents, there is no evidence that Dwight used his Yale presidency to push a political agenda. Although he served briefly in the Massachusetts legislature before relocating to Connecticut in 1783, he never

<sup>53</sup>*American Mercury*, 11 February 1812, 12 September 1805, and 24 September 1801; *Philadelphia Aurora*, 31 March 1800.

publicly backed a candidate for office. He never participated in organizing partisan rallies or distributing partisan literature. If David Hackett Fischer's designation of Dwight as an Old Federalist is correct, he would have disdained such activities.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, throughout his life, Dwight condemned the party spirit. In 1791, he warned Connecticut's political leaders that despite their virtue "cabals will undermine, jealousy misconstrue, rivalry misrepresent, and enmity blacken."<sup>55</sup> A quarter century later, he told the Yale graduating class of 1816, "the prejudices, the fervour, and the bitterness of party spirit are incapable of vindication." Because of the malignancy of partisanship, "the peace of society, of neighborhoods, or congregations, and even of families and churches has been disturbed and . . . broken up. Friends and brothers have ceased to be friends and brothers."<sup>56</sup> "This very party spirit," he declared in 1812, in the strong language he occasionally used, "is a great and dreadful evil, a smoke in the nostrils of Jehovah; an abomination."<sup>57</sup>

That Dwight was not a political actor does not mean that he did not have political beliefs, even quite strong ones. He was quite frank with close friend James A. Hillhouse, when the latter was serving in the United States Senate, in sharing his opinion that Jefferson's election will "ruin the Republic."<sup>58</sup> But the possibility of Aaron Burr's election was even more frightening. Dwight expressed similar concerns to another close friend, the Reverend Jedidiah Morse of Charlestown, Massachusetts. But

<sup>54</sup>David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

<sup>55</sup>Dwight, *Virtuous Rulers*, p. 37. For a brief overview of the scholarly debate over whether the New England Congregational clergy, including Dwight, were or were not engaged in politics, see David W. Kling, *A Field of Divine Wonders: The New Divinity and Village Revivals in Northwestern Connecticut, 1792–1822* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), p. 55n.

<sup>56</sup>Timothy Dwight, *Sermons*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe and Durrie & Peck, 1828), 1:540–41.

<sup>57</sup>Timothy Dwight, *A Discourse, in Two Parts, Delivered July 23, 1812, on the Public Fast, in the Chapel of Yale College* (New York: J. Seymour, 1812), p. 25.

<sup>58</sup>Timothy Dwight to James Hillhouse, 1 March 1800, Hillhouse Family Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Quotation by permission.

there is no evidence that Dwight ever expressed his views, either for or against candidates, from the pulpit or the lectern.

While he was silent about party matters while standing in the pulpit, Dwight was not shy about stressing the necessary interdependence of religion and politics. "The first duty of a ruler," Dwight declared, "and the first concern of a virtuous ruler, is the support of religion."<sup>59</sup> Public order could neither exist nor persist in the absence of religion. Religion was as worthy of public support as roads or schools, for "without religion, man becomes in a short time a beast of prey [like] . . . the wolf or the tiger."<sup>60</sup> While the natural philosophy of men like Thomas Paine and Joseph Priestley was to be lamented, Dwight nonetheless insisted that "religion is wholly a voluntary concern. No government has a right to dictate, nor to compel it."<sup>61</sup> And so Dwight was perfectly satisfied with Connecticut's laws, which provided public support for all Christian denominations.

Because their "real weight . . . consists wholly in their influence derived from their office and their conduct," the clergy, Dwight argued, were powerful only insofar as they were respected.<sup>62</sup> How could the clergy subvert the popular will, Dwight asked in an anonymous letter published in 1801 and addressed "To the Farmers and Mechanics of New-England," for within the congregational system they were chosen by a majority and could be dismissed at the whim of the majority? How could they simultaneously, as their critics maintained, be at once "possessed of a great degree of craft and cunning" and be "weak and ignorant men . . . destitute of talents"? As citizens, Dwight averred, clergymen have the right to express their opinions, and, since they are better educated than most of their countrymen, they have an obligation to communicate their insights. Still, they should avoid "negligence of their official

<sup>59</sup>Dwight, *Virtuous Rulers*, p. 18.

<sup>60</sup>Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York*, ed. by Barbara Miller Solomon, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 4:286. See also Dwight, *Sermons*, 1:491.

<sup>61</sup>*New England Palladium*, 17 April 1801.

<sup>62</sup>Dwight, *Travels*, 4:283–84, 295–96.



duty . . . and improper political meddling.”<sup>63</sup> And as for the clergy’s critics,

Are they not men of base morals, principals [*sic*] and lives? Are they not infidels? Men who boast much of themselves and their patriotism. Men who mind other people’s business more than their own. Men, who manage their own affairs ill, and yet think themselves qualified to manage public affairs well. Men who frequent public places, taverns, and the corners of streets.<sup>64</sup>

That Dwight was so relentlessly criticized despite his unexceptional political views and actions begs for explanation. Being the state’s most noteworthy clergyman in an age of growing anti-clericalism was certainly a contributing factor, as was being president of Yale in an age of increasing anti-intellectualism. That Yale periodically petitioned the state for funding also drew negative attention. There were, however, less obvious factors also at play. Dwight’s younger brother, Theodore, was a prominent Federalist and editor of the *Connecticut Courant*. To attack one Dwight was to attack both.<sup>65</sup> Dwight was also closely associated with two other well-known Federalists, David Daggett, secretary, and James Hillhouse, treasurer, of Yale College.<sup>66</sup> Warren Dutton, who left Yale to accept the editorship of the *New England Palladium*, was also staunchly partisan.<sup>67</sup> And, of course Dwight’s lifelong crusade against infidelity could eas-

<sup>63</sup>*New England Palladium*, 12, 15, and 26 May 1801.

<sup>64</sup>*New England Palladium*, 5 June 1801.

<sup>65</sup>For examples of the linkage of Timothy and Theodore Dwight, see *American Mercury*, 24 September 1801 and 18 February 1802. See also L. Douglas Good, “Theodore Dwight: Federalist Propagandist,” *Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* 39 (July 1974): 87–96.

<sup>66</sup>For articles connecting Daggett and Dwight, see *American Mercury*, 22 August 1805, and *New London Bee*, 11 February 1801; for articles connecting Hillhouse and Dwight, see *New London Bee*, 17 September 1800; Ogden, *Friendly Remarks*, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup>For the connection of Dwight and Dutton, see *New London Bee*, 28 January 1801. Robert Edson Lee argues for a more intimate connection between Dwight and the *Palladium*. But even Lee recognizes that Dwight’s interests were primarily religious and that he only “incidentally propagated the Federalist system.” See Lee, “Timothy Dwight and the Boston *Palladium*,” *New England Quarterly* 25 (June 1962): 229–39, esp. 238.

ily be construed as a criticism of the religious and moral life of Thomas Jefferson and other Republican leaders.<sup>68</sup>

That some of the attacks upon Dwight elicited strong reactions from Federalists and from the general public only served to raise the rhetorical bar. The *Litchfield Monitor*, for example, reported that Ogden was “thought by some to be delirious, but by most, to be possessed by the Devil.”<sup>69</sup> The *Connecticut Courant* called him the “Reverend Goal-bird” and “a half-crazy, half-idiot priest.”<sup>70</sup> As for Holt’s *New London Bee*, the *Courant* maintained that “it was originally set up and has been supported by about half a dozen sans-culottes in that town who have no more significance than is attached to a conch shell, viz., that they can make a good deal of noise.”<sup>71</sup> Both Noah Webster and David Daggett produced extended responses to Abraham Bishop’s criticisms of Dwight, and the Federalist press responded with questions about the private lives of both Bishop and Kirby.<sup>72</sup>

Certainly, Dwight should have exercised more caution in his public pronouncements. In March 1795, for example, on the eve of accepting the Yale presidency, he delivered one of the few sermons of his life that touched upon a hot public issue, the appropriations bill and the debate surrounding it. His critics later turned his remarks against him.<sup>73</sup> Once president, he should have avoided even the *occasional* sermons that thrust

<sup>68</sup>Dwight’s long concern with infidelity can be traced as far back as his poem *Infidelity: A Poem* ([Hartford?]: Printed in the World, 1788). Even as late as 1812, Dwight was at his best when he declaimed: “The spirit of infidelity has the heart of a wolf, the fangs of a tyger [*sic*], and the talons of a vulture. Blood is its proper nourishment; and it scents its prey with the nerves of a hound, and cowers over a field of death on the sooty pinions of a fiend.” Dwight, *Discourse Delivered July 23, 1812*, p. 13.

<sup>69</sup>*Litchfield Monitor*, 31 July 1799.

<sup>70</sup>*Connecticut Courant*, 11 February and 27 May 1799.

<sup>71</sup>*Connecticut Courant*, 5 March 1798.

<sup>72</sup>Noah Webster, *A Rod for a Fool’s Back* (New Haven: n.p., 1800); David Daggett, *Three Letters of Abraham Bishop, Esquire: Containing Some Strictures on His Oration, Pronounced in the White Meetinghouse, on the Evening Preceding the Public Commencement, September 1800; with Some Remarks on His Conduct at the Late Election. By Connecticutensis*. (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1800).

<sup>73</sup>*Connecticut Courant*, 16, 23, and 30 March 1795.

him into the public spotlight. His 1798 Fourth of July sermon, for instance, is a case in point.<sup>74</sup> And if Dwight had really wished to avoid controversy, he should not have contributed articles, even anonymous and nonpartisan ones, to the *New England Palladium*.<sup>75</sup> But Dwight was no different from most public figures of the era who failed to understand the viciously partisan character of the age and how to conduct themselves according to the new rules it imposed.

Dwight approached his trials with forbearance. As he wrote Jedidiah Morse, “as to Ogden and the *Bee*, I expect so long as one is alive and the other published, I shall be their favorite topic of misrepresentation. To this I yield without discomposure or fear.”<sup>76</sup> Still, he must have relished those items that appeared in his support. In February 1803, for example, after some particularly vituperative criticisms of Dwight, one “Candidus” addressed the editor of the *American Mercury* in a letter that was reprinted in the *New Haven Visitor*, a nonpartisan paper. “You will,” Candidus declared, “be looked upon as the invader of private tranquility, as the malignant envier of others [*sic*] reputation. . . . It is happy, indeed, that the men you have undertaken to slander are beyond the reach of your puny malice.”<sup>77</sup> And in November of the same year, C. Y. [Collegium Yalensis?] wrote the *Connecticut Courant* complaining about “the most unmerited abuses” heaped upon Dwight. “The Presi-

<sup>74</sup>*New London Bee*, 19 June 1799.

<sup>75</sup>Dwight wrote three series of articles for the *New England Palladium*, edited by his former student Warren Dutton. The first was “Farmer Johnson’s Political Catechism,” which appeared on 31 March, 3, 14, and 17 April, and 8 May 1801. After the first four installments, Dutton published a review of Dwight’s sermon on the beginning of the new century (21 April), which concluded with the hope that Dwight would “publish often. . . . His works will be always read.” The final installment seems to have been written in haste to respond to this suggestion. The second series was a letter “To the Farmers and Mechanics of New England,” which appeared in four installments (12, 14, and 25 May and 5 June 1801). It was the spirited defense of the clergy already noted. The third series of articles entitled “Morpheus” appeared 24 and 27 November, 8, 11, and 15 December 1801, and 2, 5, and 9 March 1802. It was a satiric attack upon the ideas of William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and other English radicals.

<sup>76</sup>Timothy Dwight to Jedidiah Morse, 30 December 1799, Morse Family Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Quotation by permission.

<sup>77</sup>*New Haven Visitor*, 8 February 1803.

dent has repeatedly expressed his opinion that the youth [of Yale] ought not to engage . . . in the political disputes of the day." While he might have his "slandorous and malicious persecutors . . . the friends of President Dwight have the consolation, that however the enemies of virtue may utter calumny after calumny, and falsehood after falsehood, they can never deprive him of the esteem and love of good men, nor spoil him of his religion or his God."<sup>78</sup>

By 1806, attacks upon Dwight had all but ceased. John Cosens Ogden died in 1800. David Austin recovered from "his mental affliction," was reunited with his wife, and lived the rest of his days ministering to a small rural parish in Bozrah, Connecticut. In 1804, Stanley Griswold left the state to edit a Jeffersonian paper in New Hampshire. As for the political partisans, Kirby was appointed to a federal judgeship in the Louisiana Territory. Bishop, rewarded by Jefferson for his support, was named to the lucrative position of collector of customs at New Haven, and he used his newfound wealth to purchase social status for his second wife. He even became a benefactor of Yale. William Duane's *Philadelphia Aurora* lost its prominence when the capital moved to the banks of the Potomac. Charles Holt, of the *New London Bee*, was a better polemicist than a businessman. His paper folded in 1802. Babcock's *American Mercury* simply became less partisan. Disputes concerning the proper relation of church and state remained a staple of Connecticut politics until after the adoption of the new constitution in 1818, but the debates no longer referred to either Dwight or Yale.

Timothy Dwight, however, has remained the Pope of New England. The fact that his death in 1817 was followed immediately by the first electoral successes of the Republican Party in Connecticut as well as a new constitution ending the privileged status of the state's Congregational church only cemented his reputation among historians. He was obviously the glue that

<sup>78</sup>*Connecticut Courant*, 9 November 1803.

held together the standing order of Connecticut. He must have been the Federalist Pope of New England.

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